



ASLEF

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JOURNAL
JULY 2012



10 Pension threat from
Brussels bureaucrats

12 ASLEF annual conference
meets in Liverpool

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General thanks delegates for great conference

THIS year's union conference was the first I have attended as your general secretary and I was, as ever, struck by the level of knowledge and understanding of our industry by the delegates you sent to the Liverpool Annual Assembly of Delegates. We're always being invited to attend 'industry conferences' with panels of 'rail experts'. I felt a certain sense of pride that most of our representatives showed a much deeper awareness than any of these esteemed 'specialists'.

The one obvious down-side was a familiar railway difficulty: punctuality! Open and far-ranging debate is to be welcomed, but for the second year in succession the conference failed to get to the end of the agenda. This is disappointing, especially for the branches who have submitted items that weren't discussed. The union's executive committee are considering what changes would be necessary to ensure we get through all our business.

I like to see the Journal reflect the broad range of items discussed at conference. Your representatives at every level must never be afraid or ashamed of anything we do in your name. I accept that members will have different levels of involvement with the union, and may react differently to issues we consider in addition to our direct work within the rail industry. No one could accuse ASLEF members of being clones!

But I also think we have a right to stimulate debate. The days when unions sought to impose views are, thankfully gone. Now we have a more mature unionism that seeks to win arguments: to convince rather than to dictate. The article on Palestine in the previous edition raised some heated comment but I don't apologise for it being in the magazine. It is only by discussing and debating issues that we can come to wise collective conclusions. That is the model for our annual conference – and I am happy to see it replicated in the pages of the Journal.

Mick Whelan, General Secretary



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Jon Parker Lee

ABOUT **ASLEF**

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**More than
just a union**

Even the government backs strike in EMT!

A letter from the Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport, Norman Baker, makes it clear that the government is 'disappointed' that East Midlands Trains pressed ahead with reducing pension contributions – the cause of the current dispute. Echoing exactly the union's argument, the government view is that, 'Leaving contributions as they are would have

ensured some stability in the current economic climate.'

'This is precisely what the dispute is about,' said ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan. 'It appears that EMT is not only taking on its employees, but is also defying the government.'

'Sadly, while the DfT clearly doesn't agree with their action, it is prepared to back the company

anyway.'

Mr Baker pointed out that, 'the Department is disappointed that East Midlands Trains has chosen to reduce contributions rather than have them remain as they are. Leaving contributions as they are would have ensured some stability in the current economic climate.'

Mick Whelan says that if the government

disagrees with what its franchisee is doing, the moral and logical thing to do would be to 'knock some sense into the company'.

'EMT is clearly out on a limb. It is time they came up with a solution to this problem of their own making which is inconveniencing passengers, alienating staff and leaving the company totally isolated.'



The letter was sent to an individual union member who raised the issue directly with the Department for Transport.

ASLEF gives evidence to Scots Parliament Rail Committee

ASLEF's officer in Scotland, Kevin Lindsay, has told the Scottish Parliament's Infrastructure and Capital Investment (ICI) Committee that, 'Our concern is that economic, rather than social, trains are run, whereas we believe that the railway should be for all.' Ownership was Kevin's central theme – he said it was 'bizarre that the Scottish Parliament controls the budget and how the franchise should be run, yet it cannot make a decision on whether the railway should be publicly owned and publicly

accountable' – but he also spoke about punctuality, driver training for disabled passenger and general passenger comfort in his evidence to the Committee.

The Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) on the Committee have now called for 'an urgent review' having heard that Scots are paying a third more in fares and taxes than elsewhere in Europe for trains that are often both uncomfortable and overcrowded.

In line with Kevin's evidence, the committee's 'Rail 2014' report

recommends more regular upgrades and improvements of trains. It also calls for phased changes to the Public Performance Measurement system so that a train will be considered on-time only if it arrives within a minute of its timetabled target. In addition it is to consider the 'indemnification' clause in franchises, whereby rail companies can call on the government (or in fact, the taxpayer) for compensation in the event of industrial action – regardless of whose actions may have led to the dispute.

The final report of the ICI Committee will be taken into consideration, along with the consultation responses, in preparation for the next franchise.

Unions unite in 'Action for Rail'



The united rail unions, with the TUC, launched the 'Action on Rail' campaign at Euston station on 28 May. Pictured here are John Page (TSSA), Bob Crow (RMT), Brendan Barber (TUC) and ASLEF's Tish McDonald who was representing Mick Whelan

The rail unions are working together on a campaign to save rail from the government's 'cuts and austerity' policies – and to stave off the implementation of the McNulty Report.

The TUC has launched a website to help publicise early campaign actions, raise awareness of the campaign and host some of our early publications and reports.

The relevant links are <http://actionforrail.org/> and <https://www.facebook.com/?ref=logo#!/ActionForRail>

RECORD RAIL PASSENGER NUMBERS

The number of UK rail passenger journeys has reached record levels according to the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR).

The 2010/11 figures show that

- 1.16 billion rail journeys took place in Great Britain – up 8.9% from the previous year.
- The total number of rail journeys for England was 1.05 billion – up 9.4% on the previous year.
- The total number of rail journeys for Scotland was 85.9 million – up 4.4% on 2009/10. Within Scotland, the total was 78.5 million rail journeys – an increase of 3.7% on the previous year.
- The total number of rail journeys for Wales rose to 27.3 million – up 4.7%.
- There were 706.3 million journeys involving London, an 11.7% increase on the previous year. Of these, 371.7 million were within London, a 17.3% increase on 2009/10 and there were 334.5 million journeys made between London and other GORs (a 6.1% increase on the previous year).

It will probably come as no surprise that 60.7% of all rail journeys in Great Britain started and/or ended in London.

UNDERGROUND MEDICS BEGIN WORK

Transport for London (TfL) has introduced a team of medics onto the Underground to help speed up the response when passengers fall ill. Twenty British Transport Police (BTP) officers have been trained and have access to two fast response vehicles to enable them to reach incidents quickly.

A third of all delays on the Tube are the result of passenger incidents, with ill people accounting for most of these.

The specially-trained officers will also assist people trapped on trains in tunnels.

Newcastle and Sunderland link up for education!

Newcastle saw another success for union learners with successes in English and Maths courses that ASLEF union learning rep Tony Paul set up in partnership with other rail unions, Sunderland College and EastCoast Trains.

The scheme promotes improvements and qualifications in these subjects and has a bonus. The colleg pay £50 per national test pass into a collective learning fund – which enables basic computer courses to be offered for free.

Tony Paul says the courses wouldn't have been possible with the help of Geoff Smith and EastCoast Driver manager Bob Howes.



EastCoast Delivery Manager Geoff Smith (centre) congratulates Graeme Gilroy, Jon Healey, Tony Paul, Peter Strong on their successes. Caroline Fulmek and Karen Forbes were also members of the first group of learners to complete an English and/or Math qualification through Sunderland College

Short Rails

○ NR CHIEF 'TO CUT EXECUTIVE BONUSES'

Network Rail's new chairman has pledged to crack down on 'the executive bonus culture' and other costs to ensure 'value for money for the taxpayer'.

Professor Richard Parry-Jones, formerly Ford's global engineering boss, said his priority was to clear bottlenecks while maintaining a robust and safe railway.

Parry-Jones, who is also a director of engineering group GKN and chairman of its remuneration committee, said executive pay is 'a very difficult issue'.

'Not for us, it's not,' says ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan.

○ EXTENSION TO METROPOLITAN LINE

Hertfordshire County Council is looking for a contractor to help build a new £80m extension to the Metropolitan Line in Watford. The Croxley Rail Link will be a 4.5 km extension of the London Underground Metropolitan line from Croxley, to Watford Junction via Watford High Street. Work will include construction of a new viaduct and bridge and embankment improvements plus new stations at Ascot Road and Watford General Hospital.

○ ANOTHER DEATH AT UFTON NERVET

The level crossing at Ufton Nervet will live long in the memories of railway men and women – and last month it claimed another fatality. David Montague, 45, was driving a Piaggio scooter when he died in a collision with a train at the same Berkshire site where seven people died in 2004.

○ 500 CLUB WINNER

The latest winner of the 500 Club draw is Carlisle Branch with number 21. The branch has scooped the prize money of £224, reports Alan Taylor from the union's Retired Members' Section.

The extreme right has no home here!

says ASLEF's Equal Opportunities advisor Lee James ...

The English Defence League, a racist organisation whose main activity is street demonstrations against the Muslim community, held its third annual 'home coming' rally in Luton last month. I was really pleased to be joined by ASLEF members and District Organiser Dicky Fisher at Unite Against Fascism's counter demonstration – and to see that the people of Luton didn't want to 'welcome the EDL home'. They want them to pack their bags and leave!

I don't know what the appeal of Luton is to extremists but a few decades ago we had the IRA and now they've been replaced by al-Muhajiran and the EDL. My home town seems to only feature negatively in the media. We've had two documentaries located here discussing the extremism debate and even got a mention at the trial of the sickening mass murderer Andres Breivik.

I don't recognise this picture of a town of warring factions and separate ghettos. I don't put on my bullet proof vest and jump into my armoured Mini to pop to Asda!

The extreme right, like the EDL, prey on people's fears and anger and they thrive in times of austerity. That's why it was so



Union members came to Luton to register their opposition to the racist EDL

heartening to see people from outside our community coming along to offer support last month – and especially the ASLEF members who made the trip.

OSTRICH ON THE TRACK! Last month a train was forced to slow down when an ostrich was spotted on the line between Ipswich and Saxmundham in Suffolk. Yes, it may not be vital news – but it's a great headline to write!

Union successes in May elections

ASLEF members had a number of successes in the 3 May elections. It was pleasing to see Alan Moir re-elected to the Council of East Dunbartonshire representing Bishopbriggs South. Alan has been promoted to Deputy Leader of the Labour Group and is Convenor of the Development and Infrastructure Committee. Former ASLEF activist Tom Mahoney was returned in Rugby – but we really shone at Immingham where we now have no less than three ASLEF members on the Council. **DAVID DOHERTY** reports ...

I'm proud to say that our regional Health and Safety rep Dave Watson has – after what seemed an endless and arduous political campaign – managed to get onto the higher authority of North East Lincolnshire Council as Immingham ward Councillor. This was his first attempt and he gave the Tories a good thrashing, as he attained one of the highest scores of the night. Dave is still a member of Immingham's council but getting elected to the higher authority is something else!

Meanwhile Neil Castle became the Mayor of Immingham on 9 May, a position he will hold along with being the Leader of the Council and of the Labour Group! Neil is based at Doncaster, but lives in Immingham.

And finally, making up an Immingham hat-trick – I've been coopted back onto Immingham's Town Council after being defeated last year after serving for sixteen years.

ASLEF active at Welsh TUC

Stan Moran moved the union's motion opposing the Coalition government's welfare reforms which was backed by PCS, while John Boreham led the conference debate on Welsh rail policy. The delegation was an active presence on the fringe circuit and held a number of meetings with MPs, Welsh Assembly members and senior officials from other trade unions.



ASLEF's delegation to the 2012 Welsh TUC in Llandudno consisted of John Boreham (Camarthen), General Secretary Mick Whelan and District 7 Organiser Stan Moran

NATIONAL EXPRESS CHALLENGED ON US 'HUMAN RIGHTS' RECORD

Representatives from the US Teamsters Union accused National Express of pushing human rights in its North American operations 'to the edge of the letter of the law' as it attacked the company's 'abysmal' record at the global giant's AGM which was held in Kings Cross last month.

The 'name-and-shame' tactics were based on a report called 'National Express Group's Diminution of Labor Rights in the US' which was commissioned by the Teamsters and Unite.

Mac Urata of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) said, 'These workers are being put on the rack when they raise concerns about respect at work, safety and their right to a union.'

The company has been the subject of many US National Labor Relations Board complaints including charges about unlawful sackings, surveillance, retribution and disparate treatment of its employees who supported unions.

First Chunnel journey for unaccompanied lorry trailers

The first freight train carrying truck trailers has passed through the Channel Tunnel. While this is a common sight on the Continent, it was a first for the UK. It set out from Antwerp in Belgium carrying parts for the car industry, arriving seven hours later at the Russell Railfreight Terminal in Barking in east London.

Discussions are now taking place about extending the service to other major British cities.

Europorte Channel says the service is fast, has a low carbon footprint and can operate from as far as Germany or Eastern Europe. 'This could take thousands of trucks from UK roads, said a company spokesperson.

India crash kills 15

Fifteen people were killed and 25 injured when a passenger train collided with a goods train in India's Andhra Pradesh state.

Train accidents in India have killed 1,220 people over the past five years. The country's vast railway network operates 9,000 passenger trains a day, carrying an estimated 18 million people.

ASLEF in Inverness

Mick Kane addressed delegates on the Economy Composite pointing out that a clampdown on tax avoidance could generate nearly £100 billion a year - while Chris Barrie castigated government benefit cuts. Kevin Lindsay criticised plans for the Scotrail franchise and outlined the union's opposition to Scottish independence during a session on the upcoming constitutional referendum.

The union also hosted a well-attended fringe meeting on the Transport Scotland proposals.



ASLEF's delegation to the 2012 STUC in Inverness consisted of General Secretary Mick Whelan, District Organiser for District 2 Kevin Lindsay, Chris Barrie (Edinburgh No2) and Mick Kane (Yoker)

Helping preserve historic gravestones

The union has donated £250 towards the £10,000 needed to ensure the conservation of two historic railwaymen's gravestones located in St John's Church Yard in Bromsgrove. Most of the funding has now been found, and restoration work should begin next month. The graves are those of footplatemen who died at Bromsgrove when a steam train boiler exploded in November 1840. ASLEF's donation will help provide signage to give visitors information about the gravestones' history and legacy. The work is being carried out by the Railway Heritage Trust.



Union plays a small part in preservation of this rail history



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The 68 delegates and ASLEF officials who made up this year's AAD – the union's annual 'parliament'

President salutes 'a well-organised union that is here to stay'

ALAN DONNELLY, the EC President, was in up-beat mood as he opened this year's Annual Assembly of Delegates, the union's annual conference, which was held in the Liner Hotel in Liverpool.

'We have a new General Secretary and a new modern five-storey head office. We will rent out two floors to reduce the running costs of the union, even though I'm proud to report that this is the fifth year on the trot that we have returned a surplus. Adequate finance is one key to our continuing success.

'I think what we have done is a great achievement, especially when you look at all the financial problems that the other trade unions are having.'

Some of the other issues he then touched on were not so positive. 'On the freight side, we have half the number of drivers we previously had, some not working from the place of their choosing, and they are doing



Alan Donnelly: 'ASLEF will be here when franchise companies have been forgotten'

more mileage and more rest-day working than ever before.'

It was not enough to say 'at least no one was made forcibly redundant'. We needed strategies to deal with the issues that have faced us, should they arise again. These were being developed with the membership in forums. 'When I joined the railway, it was a job for life. That is no longer the case. We also have to consider whether when there is an upturn in the economy, will we have the drivers and traction to meet the demand?

I don't think so.'

Alan also praised the union's educational activities, both as regards union training and the ASLEF Education life-long-learning project, calling them both 'investments that we have to maintain with their current high standards'.

The President was enthusiastic too about how the union was building or restoring links with sister unions and on a political level. 'Ed Miliband spoke at our Parliamentary reception this year,' he said. 'MPs were actually trying to get into the meeting room. I have been to Parliament before when we have had campaigns and we have had to drag MPs in to speak. It was just the same with fringe meetings at Labour and the TUC. We've turned that around. And we also need to build bridges with other unions if we are to combat government proposals coming from the McNulty Report.'

Alan stressed the central role of politics in just about every aspect of the union's work – pensions at

work, fragmentation of rail, health and safety issues, privatisation and equality.

On this topic he paid tribute to the work of the Women's Representative Committee in producing its survey of women in the rail industry and the initiative that led to the Diversity Report on recruitment. He also had praise for the activities of the Black and Ethnic Minority and LGBT Representative Committees whose work, he said, was 'not always recognised' as well as to the constantly-expanding Retired Members' Section.

He regretted that little had been achieved in improving staff travel but insisted that the issue remained a priority for the union, and concluded with a message for East Midland Trains, where ASLEF had members on strike even during the conference. 'Before you came into the industry, ASLEF was here. Before you took us to the courts over Sundays, ASLEF was here. And long after you've left this industry ASLEF will be here.'

Conference Shorts

PAID RELEASE AND UNION TIES

ASLEF is to ensure that it has agreements with all rail companies guaranteeing paid release and travel for its representatives when they are at meetings that are part of the bargaining procedures. We also assert the right of all ASLEF members to wear union regalia when they are on duty.

CONSULTATION COMPLAINTS

Employers are obliged by law to consult with health and safety reps on many issues – but often this is a shallow exercise while implementation is being prepared. The union's objective is to make agreement, rather than consultation, the legal requirement.

DBS CHAIR MOBILE NUMBER

The phone number of Nigel Roebuck, the chairman of the DB Schenker Company Council, has changed since this year's diary was published. The correct number is 07799 336 488.

The top table of GS Mick Whelan, conference chair Howard Kaye, Alan Donnelly and Tosh McDonald kept a close eye (and ear!) on the speakers at the podium



A President's eye view from the rostrum at AAD

Union to take lead on environmental issues

THE union is committed to developing an ASLEF environmental policy that can be used to assist the industry to become increasingly pollution-free. While one of the attractions of rail is that it is environmentally friendly compared with shipping, aviation and road, our industry still consumes massive amounts of fuel – which in turn produces millions of tonnes of CO2 gasses. 'It is not enough to be top of the

environmental second division,' was the message from this year's conference. 'We want to develop ideas that will make us the premier union for environmental care.'

The union accepts that progress has been made by some train operators. We are seeing lighter trains, regenerative braking systems and economical driving methods. There may be other reasons from management for

these positive moves than enlightenment (such as the price of oil) but whatever the motivation, they are to be welcomed.

The study should involve branches, company councils and members to get details about energy saving driving techniques - and schemes to share these savings with ASLEF members.

The timetable for the report would be at least in time to

report back to next year's union conference (AAD).

CHANGE THE TIMETABLE

The union is to press Network Rail to bring forward the major timetable change from December to September. This is because the December timetable changes makes it impossible for drivers to plan leave over the Christmas period, and can result in leave days being lost.

HELEN BIGGS – SO CLOSE!

The June edition of the Journal had a feature about ASLEF member, Bedford driver and BMX bike rider Helen Biggs. Helen was off to her first international race and we promised to report how she got on. The good news is that she had the thrill of wearing a GB shirt, representing her country, 'One of the proudest moments of my life,' she says.

The other good news is that Helen made it to the semi-final, so the last 16. If she had finished fourth or better, she would have been in the World Championship Final. But this time it didn't happen for her (probably foreign skulduggery!).

But just for the record, here's a picture of her, in her GB kit on track at Birmingham. We're proud of you, Helen!



Photo: rhodopsin photography

ASLEF action at Tyne and Wear

ASLEF members took two strike days at Tyne and Wear Metro last month, along with members of the RMT and Unite. GS Mick Whelan says the action 'could have been prevented quite easily' – if management had agreed to abide by the current arrangements of free collective bargaining.

ASLEF official Nicky Whitehead says the problem is that Deutsche Bahn (DB), which runs the service on behalf of NEXUS, has agreed with NEXUS that wages will be limited to the Average Weekly Earning Index. This would effectively mean the end of any negotiations and could lead to wages losing value each year.



Nicky Whitehead and Tosh McDonald (the union's vice-president) with pickets at Gosforth



Mirror man at union conference

A GOOD UNION FOR COPY!

The Daily Mirror's Associate Editor Kevin Maguire told this year's AAD he had known seven ASLEF GS's who he described with humour and considerable insight before analysing the media's considerable hostility to unions who, as employers themselves, sided with employers.

Paul says we should be proud to be trade unionists



Paul Kenny, the GS of the GMB union and President of the TUC, praised ASLEF as 'an incredibly important and critical union' that brings key knowledge about the railways. 'You show a lot more logic than this government – which says it wants to get cars off the road – so they hike up the cost of rail fares!'



Mick Whelan with annual conference chair Howard Kaye look serious ...



... but there is always something to keep ASLEF members chuckling ...



... and even applauding!

European regulation could kill off the Railway Pension Scheme - and all Final Salary Schemes in the UK



says
National
Organiser
Simon
Weller

THE unelected European Commission is proposing changes to legislation that would put such an enormous burden on the Railway Pension Scheme that it could force its closure.

Long term investments and the returns they bring, known rather oddly as the "discount rate", allow contribution rates to remain affordable in order to maintain schemes.

The amount of money expected from returns plays an important role in keeping the RPS healthy. Investments are made in all sorts of assets whether this is Government bonds, stocks and shares or property. Pension fund investors pick these different types of investments based on risk, the age profile of the scheme and the economic climate to ensure the safest and most profitable returns. These long term investments maintain the viability of the scheme.

However, the proposed changes to the Directive on Institutions for Occupational Retirement Provision would heavily restrict pension scheme investments. The proposals, known as Solvency II look to create a "risk free discount rate". Most people realise there is no such thing as a risk free investment. This would mean that European pension schemes would be forced to sell assets they think are risky (hence profitable). As a consequence the discount rate would be slashed and therefore unrealistic and unaffordable contribution rates would follow.

Less risk may sound sensible but it should always be remembered that pensions are long term investments. Risk is therefore spread over decades. New legislation simply means that pension funds must have all the money available to pay out an individual's pension at all times even if they are not due for retirement for 40 years; consequently this cash must sit dormant making little return. As a nation we already have accounting protections for pensions, known as FRS17, so these additional EU regulations are totally unnecessary.

This will also have a hugely

negative effect on the economy. Pension schemes are some of the biggest investors in Europe. If funds pull out of many investments the effect could be critical for economic recovery. We are already seeing the negative effects of austerity budgets across Europe as spending and investment is withdrawn so badly needed growth withers and dries up.

According to the National Association of Pensions Funds the measures would add a minimum of £300 billion to the cost of running Defined Benefit Schemes across the UK. In short, it would make schemes like the Railway Pension Scheme completely unaffordable.

I have represented ASLEF at public hearings in Brussels on this matter, and spoke against the proposals – the Dutch are opposed, the Germans are opposed, the Irish are opposed and even our own Government is opposed but because the French have a different view they and their Commissioner will attempt to push this through under the smoke screen of protecting consumers.

The visible hand of the very powerful French insurance lobby is to be seen here – trying to



European Commission proposals could be devastating

distort the regulations for their own competitive ends.

It's important all our MEPs know what's at stake for the UK pension industry so we're asking members to write to their MEPs and ask them to oppose these measures. You can find your MEP's details at <http://www.writetothem.com/>

ASLEF have written a model letter which can be found on the Campaigns section of the ASLEF website or is available by emailing dgould@aslef.org.uk

Tyson tells Brussels to 'back off' pensions

DAVE Tyson told this year's AAD that the European 'Solvency II' proposals are 'the biggest single threat to final salary pensions in the UK, to companies and to jobs'. Dave, who is the union's Trustee of the Railway Pension Scheme, explained that the Directive was applied to insurance companies some time ago to make sure there was more than a 1 in 200 chance of them going bust in any given year, and applied to governance, risk management and valuation and minimum capital requirements. 'Solvency II seeks to apply this to final salary or defined benefit pension schemes', he said.

He assured delegates that ASLEF had responded 'in robust fashion' to the

consultation process as he warned that the proposed legislation would 'require schemes to lower discount rates thus requiring them to significantly increase funding levels'. This would mean the rail pension scheme 'would have to find somewhere in the region of 500 billion euros in additional funding - thus speeding up the total demise of final salary pension provision'.

His message to Brussels bureaucrats was simple: 'Back off!'

● The AAD reaffirmed our position that pensions are a right and not a benefit, and resolved that any employer 'changing a scheme to the detriment of ASLEF members will automatically lead to a dispute'.



'Back off, Brussels!' was Dave's message at this year's AAD

Employment law proposals 'as vicious as Thatcher'



Victoria Phillips, Head of Thompsons Solicitors Employment Rights department, argues that the employment law 'reforms' contained in the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill, which was published in May, are a further nail in the coffin of effective employment rights in this country ...

PERHAPS the most damaging proposal is the wholly unexpected capping of unfair dismissal awards, which could reduce compensation by at least 65%.

They will be capped at between a year and three year's national annual median earnings (to a maximum of 52 weeks). Median national earnings are £26,000 a year which means (assuming the government opts for a year's cap) that a worker paid £26,000 will have their compensation capped at that. Someone paid £52,000 will still get just £26,000 – that is, six months' pay.

The cap ignores entirely any pension loss, which can be very significant.

The Bill also allows for different awards to be paid according to employer type. This is probably business size. So someone unfairly dismissed by a business employing, say, less than ten people, will be awarded less than someone working for a larger firm.

Although the proposal of no fault dismissals recommended by Tory venture capitalist Adrian Beecroft in his report commissioned by the Prime Minister isn't in the Bill, the extension on 6 April this year of the qualifying period for unfair dismissal rights from one to two years means someone with 23 months continuous service can be booted out anyway.

And while Nick Clegg and Vince Cable still proclaim their opposition to no-fault dismissals, the idea hasn't lost its appeal for their Tory colleagues.

NO JUSTIFICATION – EXCEPT PLEASING BOSSES

The government has presented no evidence of a correlation between length of continuous employment and the number of unfair dismissal claims.

Neither is there any independent evidence to back the business lobby's claims about the size of unfair dismissal awards. Even Beecroft said that the level of compensation seemed reasonable.

Also introduced on 6 April were higher costs awards to businesses in so-called vexatious tribunal claims. And judges can now sit alone in unfair dismissal claims. Previously they had to sit with lay members who brought important balance and industrial experience to the panel.

The Enterprise Bill allows judges to sit alone in Employment Appeal Tribunals too.

COSTS SPIRAL FOR WORKERS

An employee whose rights have been breached now risks having to pay their own witness expenses, such as travel and overnight accommodation, if their claim goes to a hearing. From 6 April, employment judges have the power to order that a party pays expenses themselves, whereas they were previously always payable out of public funds.

The possibility of having to pay witness expenses is likely not only to act as a deterrent to people to pursue legitimate claims but unscrupulous employers could use it to try to deter them from pursuing their claims or to force them into accepting an unreasonable settlement.

The Enterprise Bill also introduces a mandatory period of ACAS conciliation before a claimant can start tribunal proceedings.

SOP TO JUSTICE

And a curious provision is a tribunal will have the power to impose a financial penalty on employers if it concludes that the employer has breached the worker's rights and that the breach has one or more as yet undefined aggravating features. The business lobby is creating about this, but in reality it's a red herring introduced as a sop to claimants and will be little used by tribunals.

Few judges are ever prepared to say that a breach had aggravating features, let alone make recommendations. The ASLEF backed 2005 case where three Virgin Cross Country managers were ordered by a tribunal to take disability rights training remains a rare example.

Rogue employers won't be deterred anyway since the penalty will be just 50% of the award to the claimant, to a maximum of £5,000.

And if they pay 50% of it (to the government, not the claimant) within 21 days, they don't have to pay the rest. There's nothing to stop them doing this but then refusing to pay the compensation to the worker whose rights they breached.

EQUALITY ALSO UNDER ATTACK

Around the corner are further assaults on working people's rights including a watering down of the Equality Act. A current consultation seeks views making employers no longer liable for the harassment of an employee by a third party, such as a customer.

We can also expect a weakening of collective redundancy and TUPE laws, and the government remains committed to introducing fees for lodging a tribunal claim.

This frenzy of changes intended to help businesses by reducing the obligations they owe their workers are as damaging to working people as anything seen since Margaret Thatcher was at her boldest.



A current consultation seeks views making employers no longer liable for the harassment of an employee by a third party, such as a customer



THE VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Howard Kaye was chosen by delegates to chair this year's conference. It was the third time the six-foot-six delegate from Kings Cross had been to AAD.

'It's an honour that the other 67 delegates thought I was up to the task,' Howard said. 'Basically I had to ensure that the conference went the way the delegates wanted. Sometimes I would have preferred to have done business differently - but that's democracy for you!

'If I hadn't thought I could chair it well, I wouldn't have stood. But it doesn't put you above any other delegate. I'm human and when I made mistakes, I said so. I tried to be fair to both the top table and delegates. The best chairmen and women are like football or rugby referees. You don't see the best ones.

'It's also a fact that even in the most emotive debates, we were all on the same side. We all had the same objective of reaching democratic decisions in an orderly way. I hope I played a part in that happening.'

Dignified and humble in the chair

At the end of conference the response to a vote of thanks to Howard provided ample evidence that he had done just that.

THE VIEW FROM NORWICH

Chris Pearson, the Norwich delegate, was at an ASLEF conference for the first time, although he's been on the job for 32 years. 'It's still been an experience to meet drivers from all around the country and discover how people do things differently in other depots and regions. Since the break-up of the railway you get that chance less and less.

'There's been a lot of sensible people and lively debate - although when I was selected I thought, 'What have I let myself in for?' I'd have been lost without a day's training course for new delegates before the AAD.

'I'm assistant secretary and the health and safety rep in the branch. My first speech was about the environment which was a good start. It was a major issue and a good debate. I wasn't too fazed about making a speech as I've done it in other places.

'Could the conference be improved? Well, everything can. Maybe not marrying so many issues up could help to make it clearer.

'For me, the most moving speech was the person who talked about Colombia. It was brilliant.'



Chris Pearson: 'What have I let myself in for?'

ASLEF'S PAR MEETS BY TH

The ASLEF Annual Assembly of Delegates took place at the ASLEF Conference Centre in London. The day was a mix of debate, comradeship and mutual respect as the country met to exchange opinions, experiences and views on a range of topics. On these pages we try to give a flavour of the conference with a mixture of reports and interviews ...

DVDS ARE NOT ENOUGH FOR ROUTE LEARNING

Road learning DVDs may have some merits, but they are no substitute for real live experience of going over routes. ASLEF will seek agreements that all road learning, route refreshing and retention arrangements must include physically crossing the route.

PREGNANT ISN'T SICK

When a woman driver tells her employer she is pregnant, there is often a knee-jerk reaction to take her off the track, regardless of the outcome of an individual risk assessment. 'This is ridiculous!' said Wendy Hurst. 'She is pregnant, not sick!'

She called for an individual risk assessment for each pregnant driver with the proviso that all decisions reached should be in consultation with everyone involved.

'The present system can lead to women not telling companies when they become pregnant to avoid being taken off driving duties,' said Alison Miller.

falls within legal limits - but that's not enough,' said Mick Whelan as he committed the union to addressing the issue. One solution was the fitting of rubber mounted engines.

HUNT PROBLEMS CONDEMNED

Mick Whelan is to seek a meeting with the British Transport Police to explain the dangers and delays caused by fox hunts straying onto rural lines. They have caused the deaths of animals, damage to rolling stock, delays to passengers and shock and distress to drivers.

Mick will seek ways of improving the policing and prosecution of hunts that trespass onto the railway.

RUBBER MOUNTINGS FOR 66S?

The Class 66 remains an excessively noisy loco which contributes to the deterioration of hearing in our freight members. The high level of noise can lead to misunderstanding and missed communication during radio communication.

'We have had testing done, and it

FREIGHT NIGHTS SHOULD BE REDUCED

Guidelines from the Railway Safety and Standards Board would rule out the current practice of rostering eleven-hour night turns for freight drivers. The executive committee will discuss with companies how to reduce night driving hours.

THREATS TO THE DRIVING JOB WILL LEAD TO ACTION

Boris Johnson has said he is determined to run London Underground without drivers. ASLEF is as resolute that drivers are vital and must be retained if the capital is to have a viable Underground. This year's AAD committed the union to 'an immediate dispute' with any rail company that designs rolling stock without a driver's cab.

LIAMENT HE MERSEY

place last month in Liverpool. It was a week of representatives of branches across the country and aspirations on a full range of railway issues. The range of union's annual conference



Conference photos: Jon Parker Lee

POLITICS: OUT WITH THE NEW!

ASLEF's conference passed a very clear message to politicians: that they want to see the final end of the New Labour experiment/plot/period.

Delegates wanted to see Labour MPs who actually represent working people and are accountable to local parties with mandatory reselection. The Party Conference should be the supreme policy making body as we are 'tired of passing policies that are ignored by our own party in government'.

Andy Hudd insisted that we need a balanced and planned economy that will 'work for the millions and not the millionaires' while Tony Cashman insisted. 'It's not true that you can't be elected on a left agenda. Look what the voters did recently in France and Greece.'

out train drivers: and the union is just
e a safe and reliable tube service.
l company, including London

WHEN IS IT TIME TO RETIRE?

The union is to seek advice on sanctions that could legally be taken against members who do not conform to the union's policy on retirement by staying on at work after 65.

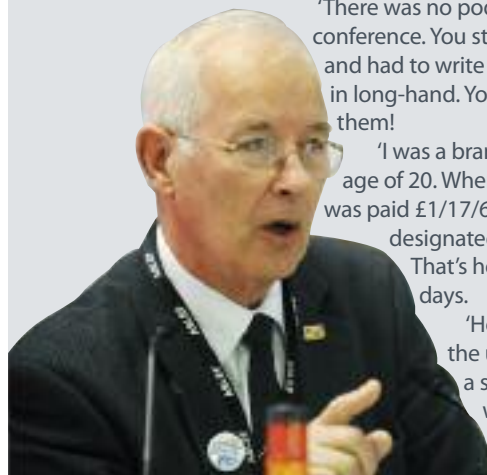
Delegates to the Liverpool conference posed questions about the morality of people over 65 being in work when 22% of young people are unemployed and about retiring so late that there is no time to enjoy the fruits of their labours. Practically, people working after 65 have a detrimental effect on the pension fund, as they are not paying in as a young recruit would and there was also concern that individual rights should not take precedence over collective agreements.

THE VIEW FROM OUR SENIOR DELEGATE

Ray Jackson from the Retired Members' Section said, 'My first conference was in 1962 when I represented Hasland branch. There were about 48 delegates in Oldway Mansions in Paignton. ASLEF had 72,000 members then. The main item was Beeching, so they were heady days.

'The General Secretary didn't stay in the same place as the delegates! W.J. Evans, his name was. He didn't speak to someone as lowly as me!

'My first speech was an appeal for a driver that the union hadn't agreed to represent. We didn't have solicitors in those days. Anyway, I lost it! Fifty years on, I won the appeal I had this year!



'There was no podium at my first conference. You stood up in your seat and had to write out any amendments in long-hand. You couldn't read half of them!

'I was a branch secretary at the age of 20. When I joined at age 15 I was paid £1/17/6d. I didn't become a designated driver until I was 36. That's how it was in them days.

'How did I get active in the union? I saw there was a shilling taken out of my wages, and I went along to find out what I'd paid it for ...'

It was 50 years since Ray's first conference

THE VIEW FROM PRESTON

Dave Cowling has been in the union for 28 years, and sums up his feelings about his first AAD in one word: 'Brilliant!'

'The conference is what the union is about: unity, camaraderie and sympathy. It is always good to get out of your own environment, and to think about the whole industry rather than just your own company. I work for Virgin now, but I started in Wales with EWS, so I've a lot of sympathy and understanding for our freight members.

'It's all a bit daunting on the first day, but it's like route learning. You go out and for a while you think you'll never get used to it, and then suddenly it's second nature.

'I'm not a natural orator, but you get up to the rostrum and give it a go. My first speech here was about zero hours and support for our EMT people who are on strike. Basically everyone is on the same side. We've had a few good laughs as well.

Dave, who spent the first 15 years of his life in Melbourne, Australia, had a birthday in conference week, which was duly noted by the conference.



'Unity, camaraderie and sympathy'



**YOU'D THINK THE GOVERNMENT
HAD BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN
ATTACK YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK.**



IT'S NOT AS IF THIS COUNTRY was exactly short of issues. We face urgent problems like a stricken economy, record youth unemployment and the gap between the super-rich and everyone else. Yet the government is devoting precious time and energy to attack, of all things, rights at work.

TUC

A stealthy series of changes that add up to a wholesale assault.

Already an extra year to wait for protection against unfair sackings, with reduced maternity rights and more dangerous workplaces in the pipeline.

These sly attacks have nothing to do with getting the economy moving. They

come from the same people who fought the minimum wage and paid holidays.

By slicing away a bit at a time, they hope no-one will notice. But we have, and you should too.

Visit the website to find out more, and tell ministers they've been rumbled.

**EMPLOYEE RIGHTS
STOP
EMPLOYMENT WRONGS**

VISIT WWW.STOPEMPLOYMENTWRONGS.ORG.UK TO FIND OUT MORE

WANTED



WOMEN MEMBERS

**interested in being sponsored to
attend conferences as visitors**

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INVOLVED**

**learn more about the
union and see how
conferences work**

**UPCOMING CONFERENCES INCLUDE
the unions annual conference, TUC
womens conference, labour party
and TUC congress**

**CONTACT Wendy Hurst, Secretary of
ASLEF's women's committee**
Tel: 07788 153 932 or email wendy.hurst3@ntlworld.com

Railway Employees' Privilege Ticket Association Working for railway people



Railway Employees' Privilege Ticket Association

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Conference speakers provoke discussion and debate

This year's annual conference (AAD) had a number of stimulating speakers. This report gives a flavour of five interesting and thought-provoking contributions ...

ON TRACK WITH DIVERSITY

Muriel Robison introduced 'On Track with Diversity' which the union had commissioned her to write on the low number of female and ethnic minorities in the driving grade. Information in the report was compiled from sources including employers, the RSSB and the union's statistics.

Her report asks what the union can do to remedy the situation. She suggests we can encourage women and ethnic minority members to be more active and promote the importance of equality and diversity among the membership.

But while the union is concerned about the issue, it is not our fault, as we do not employ staff. We could, however, work with employers to support positive action, and also consider the use of legal channels.

The union will monitor the position over the next 12 months and report back to next year's conference.



Well received report



JUSTICE FOR COLOMBIA

The Director of JFC, Mariela Kohon, urged more ASLEF branches to affiliate to the organisation. 'Despite the government propaganda in that country, it remains the most dangerous place in the world to be a trade unionist,' she said.

'Anyone opposing the government is threatened, tortured or killed, usually being accused of terrorism.' Within the last month, the sugar-cane union' general secretary was murdered on his doorstep while two others have simply disappeared. A teachers' union leader has been imprisoned without trial for organising against privatisation.

'If we were in Colombia, many of you would not be alive.'

'If we were in Colombia today, many delegates would not be alive.' JFC campaigns to have trade unionists released from prison, end preferential trade agreements between the EU and Colombia and put an end to British military aid.

REBUILDING RAIL: THE MYTHS OF PRIVATISATION

Ian Taylor who has been working on the 'Rebuilding Rail' research project commissioned by the rail unions, began his presentation by debunking a number of myths that are quoted about privatisation. He pointed out that management costs have gone up by over 56% since privatisation, and identified how over £1 billion pounds a year is wasted.

He said the argument that EU regulations prevented public ownership and insist on the split up of the network was actually wrong - and showed that ROSCOs are a 'totally unnecessary' drain on railway finances.

Bringing the railway back as a single entity is, he concluded, the only way to provide the country with a reasonably priced, accessible railway network.

● The research is available at www.transportforqualityoflife.com



Myths debunked, visions painted



'Make concessions, not war'

No military solution to Middle East

Professor Manuel Hassassian, the Palestinian Ambassador to the UK, told delegates that there can be no military solution to the Middle East. He said the religious dimension of the conflict 'scars me to death', adding that the failure of the mainstream to clinch an agreement contributes to the growth of both extreme Jews and Hamas.

'There is pressure on Palestinians to recognise not the state of Israel - which we do - but to recognise Israel as a Jewish state,' he said. 'But a Jewish state is a racist state - and 1.5 million Palestinians live in Israel. So what happens to them?'

The Ambassador warned that imposing Western democracy onto the Arab world would never work, because of its contradictions with Islamic culture.

He also spoke of threats to Palestinian culture and called on his Israeli colleagues to 'make concessions now, while you are strong. Because when you are not the top dogs, concessions will be meaningless.'

Maria Eagle: Developing Labour's plans for rail

Maria said she and Ed Miliband, 'want to be challenged with ideas and projects

that will help Labour win the next election.' She said the coalition's rail policies were 'the route to a rich man's railway' and had led to higher fares and less reliability. 'Labour is not opposed to

efficiency,' she declared. 'We are opposed to waste.'

Maria said the fragmented structure needs to be challenged, not encouraged as the Tories are doing. 'Every rail professional knows this is wrong,' she declared.

'This rail privatisation has delivered higher fares, higher subsidies, excessive bonuses for senior managers, bailouts and declining services. It is the economics of the mad-house.'

'Labour is opposed to waste, not efficiency'



Loyalty recognised at Stratford

The most recent meeting of Stratford Branch included the usual business of correspondence and some very worthwhile branch appeals, along with reports from the LDCs from DB Schenker and Greater Anglia Liverpool Street, who gave brief accounts about local activity within each area. Peter Dodgson, DBS Company Council rep, also gave a report on what's happening within that company. Following nominations for the forthcoming election for District Organiser No

5, the meeting concluded with the branch Chair making presentations to members in recognition of loyal membership to ASLEF.

Other recipients of badges, in addition to those pictured right, were C. Barwell (10 years) A. Ibe (15 years) B. Appleby (20 years) and R. Hayley (35 years). They were unable to attend the meeting so badges will be presented at the depot.

J. Thorpe, Branch Reporter, Stratford



Medals at Stratford: for (left to right) D. Smith (20 years) J. Thorpe (15 years) Chairman J. Colpus (20 years) M. Masters (40 years) G. Underwood (35 years) with Branch Secretary Peter Dodgson

Long service awards at Birmingham New Street

The April Birmingham New Street branch meeting was held at the Comfort Inn in Birmingham where we were graced with the presence of the General Secretary, EC member Dave Calfe, district organiser Dicky Fisher and the full company council.

The GS gave us an insight into McNulty and upcoming campaigns, including pensions. He also stressed the union's backing for Ken Livingston in the London mayor elections.

The meeting was made special by the celebration of several long service awards and it was nice to have the GS presenting the badges. The awards went from 5 years' service to a 50 year medal, representing a wide range of

service which totalled more than 200 years.

Our very own Company Council member and ASLEF Auditor Bill Goode received a 35 year badge.

The 50 year medallion was awarded to Driver Dave Buckingham who came along with his grandchildren to collect his medal. He is one of the few who can recall the days of steam and the transition to diesel, through to his finishing days on electrics. Dave started at Saltley and moved to New Street when the passenger work moved in the 90's. I'm sure that after all that traction and route knowledge, he will be looking forward to taking it easy - or perhaps not if his



Pictured at New Street are John Finnegan (10 years) Keith Pagett (5 years) Richard Wilkes (5 years) Riaz Hussain (15 years) Dave Peters (5 years) Dave Buckingham (50 years) Paul Furey (10 years) Adrian Daniel (35 years) 'Gaffa' Rehan (15 years) Mo Ismail (20 years) General Secretary Mick Whelan, Phil Whittaker (10 years) District Organiser Dicky Fisher, Jane Grewcock (15 years) John McDermott (10 years) and Bill Goode (35 years)

grandchildren have their way!

As usual the meeting adjourned to the downstairs bar for more tales of times past and debate on all matters railway! It

really brings home what a great union we have.

Martin Bromage-Griffiths, Reporter, Birmingham New Street branch

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

The July 1912 edition of ASLEF's Locomotive Journal contained a report of the union's conference and the activities of its ever-active national officers ...

WELCOME FOR LEEDS CONFERENCE

"General Secretary Albert Fox, who was elected General Secretary in 1901, revealed: "I found a society of some 8,000 members, 118 branches and £97,000. To-day I am sure you will with me receive the news gladly that I stand here representing 270 branches, £186,000 and 23,600 members. (Cheers)."

Visitor Mr Timothy Shea, Vice-President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, U.S.A., said: "My Lord Mayor, Lady Mayoress, Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, five years ago we had the honour of receiving your Mr Fox at our convention in Columbus, Ohio. At that convention Brother Fox extended

greetings to the members of our organisation, and our delegates were so pleased with him they returned the compliment by selecting our president to represent our Brotherhood at your convention three years ago, to extend greetings to you from our brotherhood across the ocean."

OFFICERS ON THE ROAD

Local meetings with the General Secretary or National Organiser present are part of a long tradition in our union. Here are a couple of examples of Organising Secretaries' activities:

H. Parfitt reported: "On May 17th I went to Whitland and Login on the Society's business.

On the 19th I attended an open meeting in connection with our Reading Branch, with Mr. G Lawrence in the chair, and where the late strike, Board A and the doings of the Great Western Railway Permanent Deputation were thoroughly discussed. There was a good attendance. On the 24th I went Stratford-on-Avon....."

J. Bromley reported: "On Sunday, May 11th, I attended the ordinary meeting of our Edge Hill Branch, at 11.00a.m., and spoke on the National Insurance scheme. At 2.30 p.m. I addressed an open meeting there on the "Fusion" scheme, after which I travelled to Widnes for an open meeting at 7.00 p.m. where Mr. W. Taylor came to assist me."

○ Extracts selected and edited by Mick Holder



Old friends meet at Hartlepool

Some 20 people attended a recent get-together in the town's Princess Helena pub for anyone who ever worked on Hartlepool's rail network. A good night was had by all, thanks to 91-year-old Matt Daley, who has organised these reunions for the past 17 years. This year he appeared in the 'Hartlepool Mail' appealing for his old workmates to attend the reunions. Sadly numbers drop as ex-workers pass away.

Former workmates who came along included Ron Dawkins, Ronnie Crilley, Vic Burton, Nori Greig, Bill Mulrooney, Alan Taylor, Eddie Chadbourne, Martin Joyce, David Blair, Ray Totty, Tony Applegarth, Albert Redshaw and Eric Cussons.

The lads had worked in a variety of positions on the railways, including locomotive staff and those who had been signallers and shunters. The event was held at the Princess Helena pub, in Whitby Street, Hartlepool. Matt, who was based at the sheds in Mainsforth Terrace before services were transferred to Thornaby, thanked Peter Fletcher, the owner of the pub and a former fellow railway worker, for his continued support for the reunions.

They are held every April and October at the same venue and Matt hopes for a similar success during the next gathering. The meetings welcome both active and retired railway workers.

Geoff Burton, Secretary, Thornaby Branch



At a well-attended recent branch meeting at Ramsgate, Ian Brien was presented with his 20 year badge, Martin Ward's fantastic 45 years as an ASLEF member was recognised and Trevor Greves was handed his 20 year badge, says branch secretary Nik Fetherston.



General Secretary Mick Whelan went to York's April meeting to make long service awards to several branch members. Pictured are Tosh McDonald (EC), Malcolm Dixon (Branch Sec), David Nunn (Acting Chair) and GS Mick Whelan. Mick is presenting Chris Short with his 35-year ASLEF badge. Fellow award winners Dave Spooner, Kevin Eshelby, Trevor Dent, Jeremy Barrett, Geoff Morris and Neil Raistrick are looking on.



John Cryer, the MP for Leyton and Wanstead and a former political officer of ASLEF, was the welcome guest at the last meeting of the union's Jubilee East branch. John is pictured centre, next to Mick Whelan. On the left of the picture is the Executive Committee member for London, Terry Wilkinson.

Peterborough invite hostel to reunion



The reunion attracted a good crowd in May, which the organisers hope will increase in October

The Peterborough Trainmen's Club held its first reunion of the year at The Parkway Club, Peterborough on 18 May. Among the 100-plus guests were a good number of lodgers from Aldersbrook House Hostel in Ilford that we had invited along. Everyone seems to have thoroughly enjoyed a wonderful booze and chat.

The next reunion will be held on 12 October and we would love to see more ex-Peterborough men come along. You will be made very welcome. For more details contact Mick Kisby (01733564099) or Malcolm Bell (01733 569507).

Brother Mick Fosker, Retired member, Martlesham



General Secretary, Mick Whelan, presented a 50-year medallion to Bro Tim Bones

Gen Sec welcomed at Bishop's Stortford

The May meeting of Bishop's Stortford Branch was very much a social event and was held at the Half Moon Public House. The very well-attended evening was boosted by the presence of several retired members and our General Secretary Mick Whelan.

After the brisk despatch of the business, we enjoyed a few words from Mick before he presented service badges to Bros Tristran Jones, Tony Redpath, Barry Taylor, Stuart Hornblow and Dennis Day. Finally Mick took special pleasure in handing a 50-year medallion to presenting Bro Tim Bones.

The meeting finished with a splendid buffet, supplied by Sis Michaela Hawkes.

Richard Roscoe, Secretary, Bishop's Stortford branch



ASLEF in Brighton took the opportunity of the May branch reunion to present a gift to former Branch Chair Ivan Wilson. National Organiser Simon Weller made the presentation in recognition of Ivan's service to the branch and his long standing efforts as a LLC representative. We all wish him well with his move to Scotland. Our loss is their gain. Steve Chatfield, Chairman, Brighton Branch

125 years service marked at Polmadie

A recent meeting of the Polmadie Branch was delighted to be able to honour and present membership service badges and gifts to three of its members. A staggering total of 125 years of loyal ASLEF membership is the claim for Joe Porter, George Aikman and Crawford McGhie.

Our Executive Committee Member, Hugh Bradley, presented Joe with his 45-



Loyalty celebrated at Polmadie

year badge and George with his 40-year badge. Unfortunately, Crawford was unable to attend.

We understand the ASLEF tankards presented will enjoy regular use!

Congratulations to Joe, George and Crawford - and thank you for your tremendous 125 years of loyalty.

Alan Moir, Secretary, Polmadie Branch

Gremlins in Penzance

The Penzance branch held its April meeting on Friday 13th in the Gremlin Club – but despite all these portents, it was a successful meeting with a very healthy turn-out! One member drove 20 miles each way after working to attend! (Well done Jim).

After we'd completed the agenda and cleared all the formalities, Branch secretary Mark James presented a retirement certificate to Brother Keith Netherton.

Keith had completed 37 years' service when he retired in 2009. He started at St Blazey in the telegraph office when he was 15 years old. He then moved to London and started on the footplate at Hither Green in November 1975. When he returned to St Blazey he was, in 1977, the last man to be trained on steam boilers.

He got his drivers' job in 1980 after moving to Cricklewood. When that depot shut and he was made redundant, Keith moved briefly to St Pancras and then to Plymouth Laira. In 1996 it was decided Plymouth had too many drivers, so Keith found his way back over the river Tamar to Penzance in Cornwall where he drove London-bound High Speed Trains.

Keith is a real character and the branch wishes him a long and happy retirement.

We also had the opportunity to present our Branch Chairman, Bro Philip Jones, with his 35-year service badge.

Phil started on British Railways in September 1975 at Tinsley yard after spending his earliest working years in the coal mines of South Yorkshire. He moved from the yard to



Keith retired three years ago after 37 years' service.



Branch Chairman Phil Jones finally gets some recognition!

the footplate in March 1977, arriving in Penzance in June 1987. As well as being a driver he has spent most of his years at Penzance as an Instructor and a Leading Driver.

Derek Winn, Reporter, Penzance branch

DANIEL LITTLE GREATLY RESPECTED

IT IS with great sadness that I report the passing of retired Polmadie driver Daniel Little on 15 April. Danny was aged 74.

Born in 1938, Danny survived tuberculosis in childhood, later joining the railway as an engine cleaner at Polmadie in July 1955. He then progressed through the ranks to Driver. Like many in those times Danny, while raising a family and working unsocial shifts still found the time to be involved locally within ASLEF.

With his customary determination, it was no surprise to me, that when the need arose the 'auld yin' once again stepped up to the plate, being elected to the West Coast Company Council.

Having more than done his bit, Danny

retired in 2002 after 47 years' service. The large turnout at his funeral included many of Danny's work colleagues, both active and retired. His family greatly appreciated the fact so many had travelled such long distances to pay their respects. During the service the many miles covered during his career was mentioned, and it is fitting that his wish to have his ashes scattered at Beattock summit will take place. It is a fine resting place for a west coast engine Driver.

Like many secondmen of my generation I valued and respected Danny's advice and encouragement, especially if he encouraged me to get a 'lowse' in return for a chocolate biscuit from my 'piece'! I didn't let on at the

time that my mother worked in a biscuit factory!!

Danny's involvement in organising and arranging events was not confined to the railway. For many years he was a prominent member of the Queen's Club where he served as President, organising day trips for the pensioner's forum. I recall his sadness when, faced with increased costs and a falling membership, 'his' club closed in 2007. Take it from me – that final Hogmanay night was a belter!!

Always a gentleman, Danny will be sadly missed. Our thoughts are with his sons Danny and Jim, daughters-in-law Marie and Helen and grandchildren Amy, Kirsten and Jenny.

J. McGilvray, Yoker

GEORGE CASE A FRIEND OF THE LOCOMEN

It is with sadness that I inform all who knew George that he has died after being ill for the last few years. He was 85 years old. Although not from the loco department himself, George was a great friend to those of us who were.

George grew up in Islington in a railway family where his father was a guard and his grandfather was a platelayer. He didn't complete his full term at school and didn't tell his parents that he had joined the railway. They only found out when the school board inspector went to the house to find out why he was missing school!

George began as a 'lad porter', progressing through the ranks to Porter, Box-boy, Porter Signalman, Signalman, then into Traffic Control and finally to Assistant Station Master at Kings Cross.

When he retired he enlisted the help of Kings Cross driver Mick Lesley to form the Kings Cross Retirement Club, which has gone from strength to strength.

The pair wanted to ensure that twice a year retired colleagues from all departments would have somewhere to meet up and keep friendships alive. We often hear it said that the biggest thing retired people miss is the comradeship; for no matter what department you work in we all consider the railway as 'family'.

George along with another Kings Cross driver, Dave Foster, found they had engineering skills and began building 5-inch gauge locomotives and stock which they would display and run at Engineering Exhibitions. He also wrote five books about his life and railway career. There was a good turnout at the King Charles the Martyr church at Potters Bar. Sadly cancer claimed the life of George's daughter last year, so our especially heartfelt condolences go to his wife Lillian, who looked



George progressed through the ranks to Assistant Station Master at Kings Cross

after him so well, his other daughter Linda and their grandchildren who continue to be a tower of strength to Lillian.

As a footnote, I will ensure that the Kings Cross Retirement Club goes on. It is too good to lose. For that, as for many things, thank you George. RIP.

Peter Smith, Reporter, Retired Members Section

WALLY BATES A PLEASURE TO KNOW

I report the passing away of retired Frodingham driver Wally Bates or 'Cloggy' as he was affectionately known. He was in his eighties when he passed away over the Christmas period.

Wally started on the footplate at Grimsby Depot, transferring to Frodingham during the demise of the railways during the Beeching cuts in the 1960s.

I can't remember Wally ever being miserable in all the time I knew him. He was the same 'happy go lucky' person at any time of day, every day. It was always a pleasure to be his mate. Like everyone else, I listened to many a tale of times gone by of the fish trains and his adventures when he was at Grimsby.

He liked his social life when he wasn't working and he was always on the 'bandit' in the messroom. I remember once when he was on the 'bandit' he ran out of money when there was a good win to be had. I only had 50p on me, so I offered it to him and when he played it the 'big one' came up – around £75. He gave me a fiver for the loan, which was quite a lot to me 30 years ago. My wife and I had a good night out that weekend!

Wally will be sadly missed by one and all. Our heartfelt condolences to his family.
David A. Doherty, retired member, Immingham

GEORGE INCE A FINE REP

It is with sadness that I report the death of retired ASLEF member George Ince aged 91. George started his railway career prior to the nationalisation of the industry. Throughout his career he was a stalwart member of the Society, playing an active role at Broad Street and Charing Cross and serving as a delegate to the old London District Council No1 (which later became No 5).

Involved in many campaigns, George played his part in opposing the Beeching Plan and there are many who have cause to thank him for his advocacy and his work on the LDC and within the branch.

Our sympathies go to his dear wife Emma who was always by his side.

L. Adams, retired member



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 77 St John Street London, EC1M 4NN** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER feature**. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

Back at work thanks to ASLEF

As many colleagues may know, I was suspended by South West Trains in January 2012 and had a Clause 9 issued to me a couple of months later.

Nigel Cummins (Company Council) and Graham Morris (District No1 Organiser) provided invaluable help and assistance during the difficult months that I was off work and going through the disciplinary process. Their knowledge, expertise and commitment helped to achieve a satisfactory outcome at the end of this process.

I would also like to pay tribute to the work of Woking's local reps Mick Berg and Keith Paish, other members of Woking Branch and Company Councillor Shaun Seymour.

In fact I'd like to thank every ASLEF member on SWT and their branches for the encouragement they gave me. I hope one day I can return that support.

I will never forget the faith and belief that Nigel Cummins and Graham Morris showed in me, especially at a time my employers did not.

Adam Dubauree, Driver, Woking Depot

Monarchy has it uses!

As a supporter of constitutional monarchy, I noted another less than flattering comment about our Head of State from retired member Chris Dodd on the May letters page.

Our Head of State and her grandson uses regular train services, the Royal Train provides work for our members and other railway employees, her son recently lent support to retaining Bombardier's Derby works and the Monarch has just given me an additional National Holiday!

I shudder to imagine Bro Dodd's ire for somebody who is actually against his ideals!

Rob McMillan, Wolverhampton Branch

ASLEF was a fine training ground for unionism

I recently became a retired member of ASLEF as I spent 1979 – 87 working for British Rail as a

ROYALTY: BETTER THAN THE ALTERNATIVES!

ASLEF Journal's letters page is becoming wearisome with its repeated swipes at the Royal Family. Of course having an hereditary Head of State is a bizarre idea, but what's the alternative? Ah yes! A republic. Sorry, it's been tried (in 1649). It lasted eleven years, during which time Christmas was abolished. Even the Third Reich lasted longer.

Would people come to London from abroad to see the President's town house? And wouldn't a political president spend much more taxpayers' money than under the present arrangements? The Monarchy generate many multiples of the amount they cost us, in tourism alone. No, if you really want to cut waste, focus your attention on the £800,000 an hour that the EU costs us.

Other countries look at their presidents and envy us. At a recent

Festival of Remembrance in France, the Sarkozys arrived ten minutes late for the two minute's silence. At least our Head of State is punctual, so save us the gleeful, snide comments. It's only inverted snobbery and just another example of the British propensity for spitting on our luck.

The attitude seems to be that if it's a traditional British icon, such as the Monarchy, the red telephone box or the Routemaster bus, be ashamed and scrap it. Why?

Do we really want the Blairs in the presidential palace at the end of the Mall? Or would you prefer the Kinnocks? Lord Mandelson, anyone? And you do realise, don't you, that this could only happen once we'd found a way of winking out President Thatcher? **Giles Wilson, Driver, Waterloo and Nine Elms branch**

Drivers' Assistant and then Driver before I left for health reasons. I enjoyed both the work and being in the union. In 1982 I stood on the Cricklewood picket line during the flexible rostering strike which, although we ultimately lost, was a stand we needed to make.

It was only one of a number of defeats for working people in the 1980s when the Thatcher government attacked the rights of trade unions and terms and conditions of working people. Now with the ConDem Coalition we find this onslaught continuing with legislation proposed to make it harder for ordinary people to fight unfair dismissal, to bring in Tribunal fees for bringing claims, to interfere with union democracy and further tightening balloting rules.

I am now a civil servant in the Department of Health where I am an active member of the Public and Commercial Services union. We have our own battles to fight to defend members against job cuts, attacks on pensions and the pay constraints in the public sector.

I owe a debt of gratitude to ASLEF where I first learnt the importance of being part of a

union and fighting attacks on working people and acting together to fight injustice.

Still campaigning!

Steve Norton, ex Driver, Cricklewood

Over the line on Palestine?

I realise that trade unionism and politics are connected, but I feel that some articles in the Journal can stray over a line – such as the article on Light Rail in the West Bank.

I wonder if the writer is ignorant of the history of Palestine or just biased against Israel.

There is also the possible confusion between Palestine as a geographical area and the state of the same name.

By the way, please note, I do call the author 'anti-Semitic' because both Arabs and Israelis are descended from Abraham, who settled in geographical Palestine about 4,000 or so years ago; so both are Semites. Also, any debate about 'who got there first' could be answered by 'it was a draw'!

From about 2,700 years ago, Israelis began to leave the area as a result of forced exiles, 'pogroms' and 'choice'. The 'choice' was often to accept intolerable conditions in Palestine or get away! They received varying degrees of welcome in the countries to which they went.

Persecution for many of the dispersed Israelites in their adopted countries was such that increased return to geographical Palestine came about from the 15th century AD, reaching greater numbers with the more recent persecutions in Russia and Germany.

Whilst it is true that Israelites and Arabs could and did live peacefully in Palestine, it was not always so and it was internationally agreed that partition of geographical Palestine was the best way forward.

However, from the beginning of the state in 1948, Israel has been pressured to varying degrees by neighbouring states. It was immediately attacked violently and there have been at least three major wars, apart from continual terrorist-style attacks. After each of the major conflicts, despite being outnumbered, Israel has become larger in area. And remember that Jordan, an Arab state, has annexed political Palestine in the past.

I do not agree with all of the Israeli

THANKS FOR ANTI-BNP CAMPAIGN

I wanted to convey Middleton Park Labour Party Branch's enormous gratitude for the tremendous support we received from the ASLEF Executive and District council 4 in our election campaign against the BNP.

Middleton Park was the only seat in Leeds with a BNP candidate. The last time we fought the seat in 2008

the Labour majority was only 49 votes over the BNP.

The turnout across Leeds in this election, as in most other areas, was significantly down on last year. Our direct mail strategy was, therefore, absolutely crucial in turning out Labour supporters. ASLEF's help with postage was critical.

Making such an

impact was even more crucial, since the BNP vote held up to last year's level - but we were still able to achieve a majority of 1,803 over them.

I'd like to assure you that we cut costs to the absolute bone to ensure that we used your valuable donations to the campaign to the maximum possible effect. Thanks again for ASLEF's



crucial contribution to what was a long, difficult, but ultimately very successful campaign.

Councillor Paul Truswell

policies, but I feel that the ASLEF Journal must be careful about appearing to 'take sides' on this kind of issue. I imagine many ASLEF members are either Jewish or Arab. Perhaps ASLEF could approach Israeli train

drivers for their input?
Eric Stuart, Retired Member, Rickmansworth

Continued on page 22

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ENGRAVING: ASLEF driver based in Sunderland branch offers professional engraving at reasonable prices. I can engrave anything you wish, such as the ASLEF logo on a pint tankard which is pictured. For further details contact Paul Potts by email at ppotts1969@hotmail.co.uk.



FAVERSHAM BRANCH (077) has finally launched its 25th Anniversary ASLEF/NUM badge. They cost £10 each including P&P. A few Faversham Branch Centenary badges remain

available at £5 each including P&P. To order please contact the Branch Secretary, Steve Gurdler, 18 Hunters Way West, Chatham, Kent ME5 7HL. steve.gurdler@aslefonline.co.uk or 07941 110473



WOKING HOMES BADGE to raise money for this excellent charity and home for retired rail staff. Badges are £3 each plus £1 for postage on any order. Please make cheques payable to Woking Homes and send cheques to Woking Homes, Oriental Road, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7BE



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Further information or orders to Colin Dawson 01689 849 543 or 22 Hutchison Road, New Addington, Croydon, Surrey CR0 0BD.

Pro-Palestine propaganda?

As an ASLEF member of long standing and a driver on the London Underground for the last eleven years, I was horrified to read the whole of page 16 of the May Issue of our magazine being devoted to pro-Palestinian propaganda.

Hugh Lanning is wrong in his understanding of 'occupation'. Israel's presence in the West Bank is in fact fully legal. In 1967, Jordan, the illegal invader and occupier of that territory, attacked Israel at the start of the Six-Day War, forcing Israel to defend herself. Israel is under no duty to return recaptured territory without a full peace agreement. Currently, there is only an interim agreement in force - made in 1994 - which leaves the issues of Jerusalem and Israeli settlements to be settled in final status negotiations. Through no fault of Israel, these are still on-going.

Lanning misleads us in claiming that Gaza is 'occupied'. It isn't. Israel withdrew all her troops and civilian settlements in 2005. Since then, Palestinians have launched thousands of rockets from Gaza aimed at Israel's civilian population. Israel and Egypt therefore try to stop the import of weapons and weapon-making materials into Gaza by preventing unregulated access via sea controls and security barriers.

Innumerable media films and eyewitness accounts testify that Gaza's civilians are not starving. They show well-filled stalls and shopping malls and plenty of food and other supplies constantly entering into Gaza from Israel as well as sick Gazans crossing into Israel for free medical treatment.

Mr. Lanning also ignores the positive impact of the Jerusalem Light Railway. Regardless of international politics, the railway unites Arab and Jewish communities in Jerusalem and gives the travelling public of all faiths and races a chance to mix in a normal and peaceful way, instead of in violent confrontation.

Andy Burton, Metropolitan Line Driver, Harrow-on-the-Hill Depot

ASLEF means help is at hand

My family and myself would like to put on record our thanks to all Cross Country drivers, branches and AAD delegates for their support during my recent disciplinary ordeal.

I'd like to offer special thanks to my fellow drivers at Plymouth Depot whose unity and concern over the last few months has been nothing short of superb. I am also grateful to Stan Moran (the officer for District 7), EC member Brian Corbett and the rest of his colleagues, Miles Bidgood and the rest of the Cross Country Company Council and my local LLC reps for their advice, help, and backing during this difficult time - but most of all their belief in me as a driver.

It's good to know that when you are in what seems like a desperate situation, help is always at hand.

**Thank you ASLEF.
Driver P Caddy, Plymouth**

Grateful for AAD backing

I had to represent a CrossCountry driver on a clause 9 hearing the week of AAD. When I examined the paperwork and the charges I realised that this should not be a discipline but something that should have been dealt with under the driver individual support system. I was therefore uncomfortable with the hearing from the start, and my fears were grounded. The driver was dismissed.

I immediately phoned the General Secretary at conference and an emergency resolution was put to the floor by Cardiff branch. I am pleased to report that at the subsequent appeal the driver was reinstated and the Company Council will now meet CC management to draw a dividing line between discipline and DISP.

I would like to personally thank Mick Whelan our GS, Alan Donnelly the EC president and all conference delegates for giving me a resolution to take to the appeal, along with EC member Brian Corbett, the Company Council, brother Miles Bidgood for getting me valuable information and all the branches in CC.

When we work together, we are strong. It's a simple message, but as this case proved, it's a formula that works!

Stan Moran, Organiser, District 7

A cross word

I would like to comment on the Journal crossword.

The previous compiler offered us a straightforward 'crossie' but recently it's become a 'cryptic quizword'! Many retired members have a go at completing it, but now you need to be a member of 'Mensa' to do so!

**Let's go back to a simpler puzzle - before we retired lads are 6 down and 3 across!
Bill Jones - retired member**

○ Thanks for this, Bill. We've put steps in train to produce a more accessible puzzle. MW

Mechanical test has merit

I am proud to be a member and representative of a great union like ASLEF - but I'm disappointed that the union wants the removal of the Mechanical Comprehension Test from driver selection for three reasons:

○ it could be offensive to women and ethnic minorities to presume that they find this test especially difficult.

○ ASLEF is at pains to describe train driving as a technical role in order to dispel any assumptions that the job is low skilled. I agree.

For safety's sake we should, therefore, be testing a candidate's aptitude for technical work.

○ the police reduced their entry requirements in similar fashion some twenty years ago - and their pay has gone from being above that of train drivers to approximately half.

○ under present economic circumstances I feel this is the wrong time to be making it easier to recruit our replacements.

Kevin Peat, Exeter

Fines instead of accountability

I share the General Secretary's fury (GS column, May) that fines are imposed in place of accountability. However, as I wrote many months ago when Labour introduced its laws on Corporate Manslaughter, custodial sentences were excluded and fines, which are paid for by the passengers, would be imposed. I recall saying that if this system made common sense I was the Man in the Moon. Yes it is truly a folly.

However, that is what we have and successive governments are moving ever further from statutory control. The Rule Book is not based on legislation hence operators can easily obtain their 'derogations' or, as the Oxford Dictionary interprets, 'lessenings'. There is an advantage in that at least drivers have fewer legal threats hanging over them than might be otherwise.

Rob McMillan, Wolverhampton Branch

Pat On Back For ASLEF And Thompsons

I would like to say a big 'Thank you' to ASLEF and Thompsons solicitors.

When my 13-year-old disabled son Harry, who was born with Di-George syndrome, needed legal representation I contacted the union and Thompsons.

Both treated my family with utter professionalism as they dealt with the legal case on Harry's behalf. I can't thank everyone involved enough for a satisfactory outcome.

ASLEF isn't just there for your protection - but for your family too.

Glyn Whettleton, Driver, Salisbury

Nicked pic

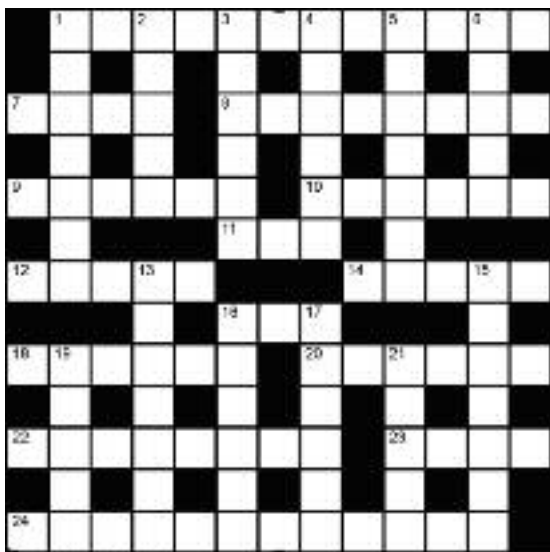
I was surprised to see my photo of the signs at Witham Station published in the June Journal - as I did not send it to you.

However it is always nice to share an example of railways (British Rail in those days) getting it wrong.

Peter Manley, retired member, Colchester

○ Sorry for our error, Peter. But what a good picture! MW

Prize Crossword No. 77 set by Zebedee

**Across**

- 1** Rank above Brigadier (5-7)
7 Down-in-the-mouth (4)
8 Severely scolding (8)
9 Decipher (a code) (6)
10 Polite request (6)
11 Rodent (3)
12 Musical pace (5)
14 Jumped, vaulted (5)
16 Victorian ____ (3)
18 Is the same as (6)
20 Iron-attractor (6)

- 22** Cigarette poison (8)
23 Honey alcohol (4)
24 Enter field of warfare (2,4,6).

Down

- 1** Native of Valetta (7)
2 Large aircraft (5)
3 Elastic material (6)
4 Thrown into ecstasy (6)
5 Strict, excessive (7)
6 Indian currency (5)
13 Military group (7)

- 15** Aristocracy (7)
16 Lapplander (6)
17 Single-celled animal (6)
19 Capital of Ecuador (5)
21 A series, range (5).



MARKS & SPENCER

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

Solution to Crossword No 74 which appeared in the June 2012 edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Len Sidebotham** from **Birmingham**

Across: 1 Upper crust, 6 Limb, 9 Typewriter, 10 Ices, 13 Growler, 15 Aboard, 16 Salmon, 17 Travellers' tales, 18 Either, 20 Settee, 21 Devised, 22 Team, 25 Naked truth, 26 Rang, 27 Unfriendly. **Down:** 1 Unto, 2 Pops, 3 Reward, 4 Railway engineer, 5 Scenes, 7 Incomplete, 8 Businesses, 11 Last letter, 12 Local train, 13 Greeted, 14 Rattled, 19 Remain, 20 Settle, 23 Fund, 24 They

Name.....
 Address.....

Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 74th ASLEF crossword in the June edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN by the 14th of the issue month.

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